

VZCZCXRO3597
OO RUEHBI RUEHCI RUEHLH RUEHPW
DE RUEHNE #0154 0231322
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 231322Z JAN 09
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 5187
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 7346
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 1127
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 5880
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 3071
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1482
RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO 6070
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEIDN/DNI WASHINGTON DC
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 7555
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 8091
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 000154

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR S STAFF, P, SCA

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/23/2019

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINR](#) [IN](#)

SUBJECT: PRIME MINISTER TO UNDERGO BY-PASS SURGERY

Classified By: Political Counselor Ted Osius for Reasons 1.4 (B, D)

¶1. (SBU) Media sources and government officials confirmed that Prime Minister Manmohan Singh will undergo heart by-pass surgery tomorrow as one or more of his arteries have blockages. He was admitted to hospital tonight. Minister of State for External Affairs confirmed this to DCM and MEA Joint Secretary Gaitri Kumar and Congress Party leader Digvijay Singh confirmed this to PolCouns today.

¶2. (C) Our contacts in the Prime Minister's Office tell us that a team of doctors from Mumbai flew to Delhi today to conduct a pre-operation assessment. The procedure is expected to last two-three hours followed by 24 hours in the ICU and a four-week recuperation period. Dr. K.S. Reddy, a cardiologist from the All India Institute of Medical Sciences who has been the PM's personal physician, will head the medical team responsible for the operation. The medical team is likely to recommend that the Prime Minister excuse himself from election campaigning this March-May.

¶3. (C) MEA's Kumar told PolCouns Foreign Minister Pranab Mukherjee has already assumed the responsibilities of the Prime Minister and will remain acting Prime Minister until such time as Manmohan Singh is well enough to resume his duties. MEA's Sharma told DCM that the GOI has cancelled all high level visits to India scheduled for the coming weeks. Mukherjee has served as acting Prime Minister on previous occasions during this government's tenure when the PM was out of the country.

¶4. (C) Comment: Embassy notes that there are no constitutionally mandated rules of succession in India in the event of a Prime Minister's death in office. The constitution merely requires that the majority party in parliament select a leader and notify the President of the selection. Three Prime Ministers have died in office in India in the past -- Jawaharlal Nehru, Lal Bahadur Shastri and Indira Gandhi. The succession process followed after their deaths offers some precedence for what is likely to happen. In each instance, the Congress Party chose the senior most cabinet minister as acting Prime Minister while the party leadership met/negotiated to select a new Prime

Minister. The time taken for this process varied from a day or two (when Rajiv Gandhi was selected to succeed his mother) to more than a month (when Indira Gandhi was chosen to succeed Lal Bahadur Shastri.) The Prime Minister's health issues open up the debate once again of who will be Prime Minister if the Congress Party returns to power after the election. Mukherjee and Defense Minister Anthony are obvious candidates should Manmohan Singh not be up for the job. Rahul Gandhi's chances will increase if the Congress does better than expected in the April-May elections.

WHITE